764 is two or three meters wide at the surface of the ground, it is
766 barely a meter wide at a depth of a meter and a half. Three of its walls are vertical, and the fourth is sloping. At the bottom and along the whole length of this fourth side, a hollow is prepared to receive the body, which is placed on its right side with the head toward the south if the deceased is a man, and to the north in the case of a woman.

764 It is usual for the priests of the brotherhoods to dig the grave. In the course of their work, following a special ritual, they collect various elements for [168] their magic. In any case, it is regarded as dangerous to handle anything having to do with death, and only a priest can do it with impunity.

When the time for burial is at hand, the touching ceremony of farewell to the dead takes place under the direction of the principal gravedigger. Wrapped in the mats on which it lay in the house, the body is placed under a shelter (geva) in the courtyard of the house. Everyone in turn pays his respects to the deceased and asks pardon. Everyone in turn, from the eldest to the youngest, comes forward, accusing himself of failings and faults and begging the deceased to grant him protection. All this is done through the mediation of the principal gravedigger who ceaselessly intones: "Pardon us! Do not be angry; we loved you and respected you; be happy and protect us!" Then everyone chants in unison: "Give us rain in the winter, make our harvests abundant; bring prosperity to our houses, and give us many children, wives, and wealth."

When this ceremony has come to an end, the gravediggers lift the corpse to their shoulders and, preceded by the weeping and lamenting children (de-u) and followed by the
[482] crowd of relatives, friends, and neighbors, they set off at a fast pace, almost on the run, toward the tomb. There, the body is put down beside the grave; the men stand around it with the women behind them. The sons of the deceased go down into the grave, open the mat, take hold of the body, and place it in the niche. They tear loose a corner of the shroud or shirt and hand the end of this torn fragment to someone present who holds it outside the grave. With wooden scoops or sun-dried tiles they

881 302 On the same day the young girls in certain localities have a characteristic ceremony. One of them whitens her face, breast, and back with a mixture of milk and ashes. Thus daubed, she dashes out of the village brandishing the spatula (to-n-galama) which is used to stir mush (to) in the pot; her companions follow her, shouting. The band goes around the village four times in this fashion, each time stopping at the crossroads. At these points the girl who is bedaubed throws handfuls of food (1), provided by her companions, to the spirits, crying: "Dege dule (2)." Her companions reply: "Naloma (3)."

[262]

1. Usually basi (couscous) made with fish.

2. Literally, "thick mush."

3. That is, "fool."

881 527 [273] [576] The eve of the soli (soli-si). During the evening preceding the soli, the families concerned enjoy an ample meal, accompanied by innumerable jugs of beer (dlo) as is the custom at all festivals among the Bambara. This is a time of special merriment, of shining faces and greasy hands, and it is good form for the men and boys to belch noisily, saying repeatedly: "ne ne fa," literally, "I am full," that is, "I am replete." The [301] women wander about the lanes, wrapped in their best skirts, with balls of amber in their hair and small silver or even gold rings in their ears and nostrils and rather heavy bracelets on their [482] arms and ankles. Some carry jars of dlo on their heads, while others carry gourds full of couscous, dege, or hot sauces which are often nauseous with smoked or spoiled fish. After the meal everyone gathers on the public square, forming a wide circle whose center is reserved for the dancers; piles of dried millet [373] stalks are used to make bright fires which illuminate the scene and warm the audience.

881 302 The "boys of the soli" (soli-ma-tye-u), their heads

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2: Monteil--382 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

[End Plate 2]



Fig. 3. Bambara girls in outdoor dress, Djenné Region.



Fig. 4. Bambara women and girls about to set down burdens carried on their heads, Djenné Region.

Plate 2

181 "2. The Bambara makes a solid and disciplined infantryman ... 142 Mentally he is rather dull and stupid, physically he is stocky and solid." Previously, the Abbé Henry had concluded in these terms: "The Bambara is a farmer ... Well proportioned, his height is medium, neither tall nor short. His chest is strong, and his short, thickset neck supports a large head covered with black, wooly hair. Nothing in his visage betokens spiritual force, energy, intelligence. His forehead is receding, his eyebrow arches are rather pronounced, and his jet-black eyes, of which the white part is slightly cream (!), are straight. His jaws, nearly always well toothed, project slightly; he has strong, thick lips, a short chin, cheekbones ... a little projecting, and his flat nose is horribly open and squashed at its root.

145 "The wife, as well as the husband, is strong, robust. More often than not she is knock-kneed, and this constitutional defect doubtless comes from the fact that she is obliged, from her earliest 142 childhood, to carry rather heavy burdens on her head, burdens often too heavy for her strength [sic]. Mentally, the Bambara has a mind 181 as thick as his body. Slow to understand and lacking curiosity, he has no desire to improve his condition. 'What my fathers did, I must do' -- that is his great principle ... Lazy, good-for-nothing even, he believes he's done everything if he has enough in his granary to feed himself and his family ... Timorous, he fears the European exactly as a slave fears his master, and if he serves the European passably well, the latter is greatly mistaken if he thinks he has gained the native's affection. He detests the White, as he detests the Moslem; the White is the conqueror, an anti-fetishist, and therefore an enemy."

Finally, M. Monteil, in his Monographie de Djenné [Djenné Monograph], tells us in his turn: "... elongated skull and pronounced 142 302 prognathism; the black, wooly hair is often gathered in braids by the young people ... the top of the head is often shaven, which makes the forehead look larger. The women affect a sort of transversal crest.

142 "The forehead recedes, the eyebrow arches project ... the nose [110] flattened, the root of the nose squashed, the nostrils gaping wide, the lips thick ... the teeth wide with little space between ... the neck large, the shoulders wide and straight, the chest strong and long, the members robust, the joints thick. Rather often for the woman, sometimes for the man, a fairly pronounced steatopygia.

825 village, I thought at first that here lay the reason for this rest, extraor-
787 dinary during the time of the most intensive hoeing. Not at all; the
[262] pagan Bambara were resting, and the women were giving their husbands and children dégé (millet flour mixed with milk and honey water) in obedience to a hyena's command. The hyena, it was said -- and all the sorcerers confirmed this -- had emerged from its dumbness, its tongue had been loosed, and it had predicted to the people of the west that a plague even more terrible than that of the caterpillars would descend on the country. Only one means to avert it remained: to refrain from going to the fields on Friday and to treat themselves to dégé, the food so dear to Moslems.

● 1182 On my excursions I have often met men and women carrying
757 on their heads a gourd or a basket containing a handful of leaves or
824 some bundles of roots, and apart from the customary greetings it
784 has been impossible for me to get a word out of them. And why this silence? They were carrying a medicinal plant, a remedy which would lose all its virtue and all its efficacy if they conversed on the way, and they had to take care not to trample such-and-such a plant that grew on the edge of the path.

757 The Bambara quite readily names the plants and herbs whose
753 curative powers are known to him, and yet in the presence of a sick
784 person he will very seldom give you the name of the remedy the latter is taking, or the names of the roots and leaves that make up his poultices. Sickness, he believes is a force, a power which tortures our bodies. He is afraid that in naming the remedy he would provide this power with a weapon against its healing virtue, which is another force or power. He sets the second power against the first to make it leave.

811 It is evident that he attributes bits of reason and emotion to
784 everything, that he attributes human feelings to all that is animate and inanimate. The "taboos" are not merely one piece of evidence of this, they are an irrefutable proof of this attitude.

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852 old men and important people of the village, as well as friends, are invited to squat before the jugs and partake of the liquid refreshment.

## The Dasiri Fetish, Protector of Villages

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621 The dasiri is the chief of all the gnena, or djine. In order that its worship may be better understood and that the reader may have an idea of the power of its priest, I must go into a few details which cannot help but throw some light on Bambara organization. Let us, for example, take a village that is being founded: we are present at the election of the priest of the dasiri, the gnéna-n-sonnaba; at the choice of the fetish tree and of the sacred animal, the genie's mount; at the enthroning of the sacrificer; and finally at the sacrifices.

### Election of the priest

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[483] The population has grown, the surrounding land is exhausted, and a group of families must move out. The old men who are still lively and the youths full of strength and life take up their arms and fasten a dirty goatskin, a foroko of provisions, on their shoulders and scatter in the bush in search of less ungrateful soil. When they have found it they go back to their homes, and the council of family heads meets to choose a leader. This leader is really a priest, for his chief function is to sacrifice in a public and formal manner to the blonda ba sou (1), the shades of the great entry hut /116/, that is, to leaders

1. Blon, "entry hut"; da, "door," "doorsill"; ba, "great"; sou, "corpses," "shades."

and priests who, just like him, held the reins of power, and to the gnéna, genii, spirits, and fetishes, whence come his names of gnéna-n-sonna ("he who sacrifices to the gnéna fetishes") and gnéna-n-sonnaba ("great sacrificer of the gnéna fetishes"). He alone has the authority to sacrifice to all /these spirits/ in the name of all /the people/.

181 that she is a girl, that one day she will be a man's plaything, an
831 object for his pleasure. The child would leave smiling and replace
her three fingers of rag even as she walked away. At dinner time a
[482] big girl would come carrying the gourd of tô, or sorghum gruel, on
her head, and on the palm of her right hand, at shoulder height, the
platter of dried fish sauce. She would be greeted from as far away
as she could be seen and asked for a report on her whole body, and
indeed there would be no stopping at "how are your feet" nor even at
"how are your breasts." And the girl would answer all these vile questions
without getting excited, and when a well-washed hand, ready to
be used as a spoon, embraced her or lifted her breasts, she was not
shocked; only the opposite would surprise her.

887 Here and there in the village a giant tree stretches its branches
538 afar, and the old men, lovers of endless palaver, enjoy themselves
521 under its shade. They go there from the early morning to weave cloth,
make mats, tan hides, scour goats' horns intended for powerful
amulets, etc., and often even /159/ just for the purpose of spending
the hours dozing. And in the midst of all these gray, or at least
graying, beards, swarms a world of children. Among the old men
there are good storytellers /conteur/, who excel in stories of hunting
and war that throb with interest -- but why, alas, must they always
graft on some salacious incident? Their mouths are full chiefly with
[831] stories of adultery and fornication. They will not spare you a single
detail, and they will readily go back to the very beginning so as to
lack no precision whatever. And the moral of these stories can be
reduced to this: "There is nothing in this world comparable to the
pleasures of the flesh; let us enjoy marriage and never pass up a chance
to obtain this satisfaction."

521 If the old men are this lewd, is it surprising to hear the young
831 men describe the ugliness of their bestial evenings while they make
864 mats, stretch the hides of drums, or sew a blouse, a cap, or trousers
for themselves in the b'lon, or entry hut? They talk constantly of their
soungourou, and this term, which should simply mean an unmarried
girl, means any woman, married or not, who gives herself to the
first comer.

Without any shame they talk and chat about all these vile acts
before their little brothers, before children ten and twelve years old,

881 until they are completely healed; for it is not until evening, when the setting sun reddens the horizon and takes on its bloody hue that they re-enter the village. From this day on they wear a costume (all [292] yellow if they are Bambara) of trousers, a blouse, and on their heads a kind of handkerchief tied under the chin (4). They pass the time in

4. In some villages, instead of the yellow handkerchief the circumcised have a cap with two points. In Bani country the circumcised wear the blouse and handkerchief, or cap, and nothing more.

making mats, singing, striking together gourd disks strung on a stick, and especially in eating, "for they are being stuffed," and in sleeping. /181/

881 But in speaking of the boys, I forgot the little girls! They undress under the tree nearest to the sacred karite. Naked as a worm, 304 each one when her turn comes runs at top speed with her abdomen to the ground and throws herself into the arms of a woman, also of the blacksmith caste, who immediately cuts her. On a braided platter, [285 made of fine, pliable grass, the mother or her substitute receives the 415 bloody fragment which will be a grigri, a talisman or good-luck 189] charm for the house, and while the gunpowder speaks, the disabled girl, pretending not to be suffering at all from the loss of her clitoris, goes back to her place, and another replaces her.

881 The session ends with the last girl, and the crowd breaks out in a song of joy and triumph. The mother, the eldest sister, or a [482] serving woman wraps the excised girl in a big white cloth and carries her astride her back to the village to the hut which has been prepared for her (1). This carrying, so laughable in itself (they can walk, even

1. Each village is divided into quarters. The excised girls of each quarter have their hut in that quarter.

[621 346]

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Gnâma fambali, bo n'yé!
Murderer gnâma (who kills), go away from me!

And coming back they sing songs and even improvise some to greet the old and influential men of the village. Back in their huts they kneel on the mat to stretch out or sit down, and there is silence, the silence of schoolgirls which is not broken except in secret, with trembling and in a low voice.

3. The Da Woro Festival, or the Sixth Day Festival

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Boys and girls have paid the tribute of blood to the tribe, five days have already elapsed, and this is the evening before the sixth. Far over there in the west the sun has disappeared behind the heavy baobab trees that border the horizon, myriads of stars twinkle in the sky, and the moon, followed by Venus (Kolo mouso, Nièlé, "Nièlé, wife of the moon"), traces on a blue background its silver crescent singed with a gold border.

All the paths that lead to the village are full of people walking, seeming like an endless ribbon or a snake that folds back on itself only to stretch out suddenly. Behind the band of young girls walk the women, each with a black cherub on her back that always wakes up to cry and demand the breast; and to them the girls have entrusted their little loincloths, the cloth slings with which they gird themselves for the dance. The girls walk quickly, for although they carry on
● [482] their heads tall pyramids of gourds held in nets of large mesh, although they carry the fiancé's present to the queen of his heart -- salt; dégé, or millet flour mixed with honey water and milk; d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer; millet and dried fish in which worms crawl; they are confortable in their clothing; /183/ nothing hinders their movements except a narrow cloth band three fingers wide which passes between the legs, is fastened at the waist in front, and waves in back in a limp and soft train. And in the night there is the rustling of dry grass trodden under foot; /there are/ long peals of laughter, light jibes that are well aimed and to the point, and witticisms, for the maiden's tongues have been loosened, and they do not lack wit.

764 This ceremony, as beautiful as it is touching, ends with this prayer: "Give us rain when winter comes, give us a plentiful harvest, a vigorous old age, children and wives, and give us prosperity." [483] Four strong fellows then come and take the corpse on their shoulders and, preceded by children and grandchildren who shout and cry, they carry it to the cemetery at almost a run, and the whole crowd follows them (1). The men line up around the grave, the women place themselves behind them, and the sons of the deceased go down into the grave. They undo the mat, take their father in their arms, and lay him in the niche on his right side, facing east. Then they tear a little of the shroud, or white blouse, of the buried man, and one of those present takes the strip torn off and holds it outside of the grave. [477] The children build an arch above the corpse out of small boards that are sometimes worked and colored, but most frequently out of wood chips (faléma) or large slabs of earth dried in the sun. While they are building, the youths mix mortar to stop up the cracks and thoroughly coat the whole structure. The women clap their hands and then sing in low tones to the sound of the drums.

1. In Bani country I have seen the spear of the deceased carried with great ceremony. The oldest son from time to time threw a few cowrie shells onto the corpse, and the crowd rushed to get them. This djansa is seldom performed, and the custom is not at all general.

764 782 When the work is done, the children come out of the grave, and the person in charge of the funeral ceremony comes forward, on his shoulder a hoe with the blade hafted in reverse and in his hand a gourd of water. He leans over the grave. The drums stop beating, the women are silent, and he pours water on the head of the buried man three times, saying: "See /221/ this water, do not be angry, forgive us, give us rain in winter and a plentiful harvest (1). Whether

the women belong to him but he cannot make them his own. From then on they remain without husbands unless they ransom themselves, and they quickly become soungourou (4). /224/

4. Soungourou, a woman who gives herself to the first comer.

Burials of the Second Category, Those of Heads of Families

Having described the respects paid to old people, that is, to grandfathers, I now need only proceed by elimination and say which of the procedures listed are not included in the burials of other persons. The honors paid to the gouatigi, or head of the family, whether or not he is married, are identical, or almost identical, to those paid to old people. But if he is not a hunter and none of his children is an initiate of the sect, his death is not announced by gunshots. Moreover, there are no dances except for the djansa, held evening and morning for three days, nor does anyone come at the time when the body is removed to the cemetery to accuse or excuse himself for a lack of respect or consideration toward the deceased. Through the intermediary of the herald or of the person in charge of the funeral ceremonies, each pays his respects and his few cowrie shells, and, after a pardon is asked on behalf of all, the prayer is said.

If he dies childless or is laid in the grave on a Wednesday or Saturday, unlucky days, the deceased gouatigi receives a white pullet to pay the spirits for his welcome as he enters Lahara, and he receives it alive. If a wife of a gouatigi is buried on an unlucky day or dies without having given birth to a child (1), an egg of a brooding hen is

1. If a woman dies after all her children, but has given birth to a child and nursed it, she does not fall into this category. It is a disgrace to receive a hen's egg because one has not had children. The rule is the same for men.

[558]

766 When they have sewed and tied it well, they [illegible] it on their shoulders
794 and head on the double for the exit door. There they stop and without any respect roughly set the body down. Armed with picks they make an opening in the wall of the hut and, seizing the corpse by the feet, they drag it and put it into this opening. Strong hands seize it from the outside, they pull and the others push, and the excommunicated one comes out of his dwelling and appears in the alley or on the square.
[482] Four fellows -- sons of the fetish, for they alone are present at these burials -- take him on their shoulders and, running, carry him to the cemetery. At the edge of the grave they put down their load, the initiates give a loud cry, a sort of roar, and they roll him with their feet into his final home. For such people there is not the slightest farewell or prayer, and the grave is filled at once.

In the evening the fetish is brought out, and the initiates abandon
[789] themselves to their sacred dances, while the god, in the hands of its priests, /232/ runs about the village and its environs, exorcising. All night long nothing is heard but the bellowing of horns and trumpets and sacred hymns shouted by the crowd, and from a distance one would say they were dull rumblings or the actual cries of wild animals.

## 8. Worship accorded to the Dead

769 At the death of a Bambara not the slightest sacrifice is directed either to him or to the deceased of the family. However, the worship of the dead is prevalent among the Bambara, althought it cannot be compared to the worship of the genii, especially of the boli. Nevertheless, everyday one can see, at the door of one family or another, a large splash of blood on the wall about a meter from the ground, a brownish octopus one might say, throwing its twisted arms here and there and struggling against a clump of feathers stuck on its back with the juice of a chewed kola nut. Some people have seen in this worship the basis of the Negro religion and, no doubt because they did not know the language and have been unable to give an exact meaning to the words caught by their ears, they have portrayed the Bambara with knife always in hand, ready to slaughter in honor of his relatives. Because they group together all saraka and sacrifices,

4: Henry--283 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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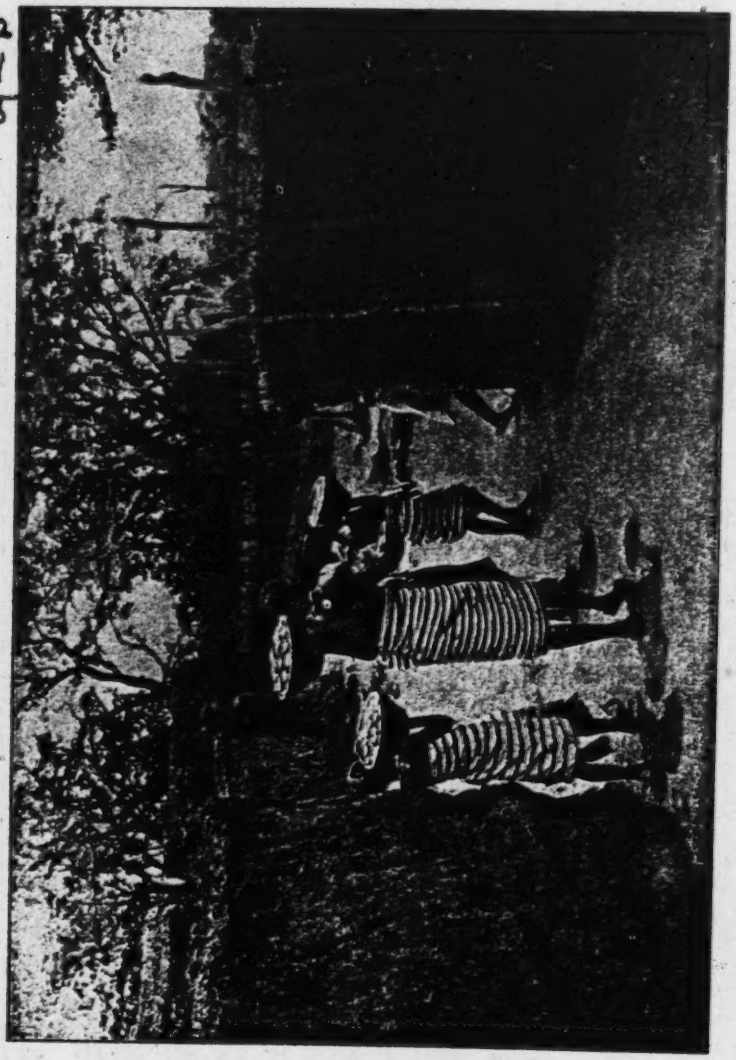

Bambara wedding.
The meal is carried to the young bride and her maids of honor (at Moundjirila).